

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 TRSY-02 DHA-02 /070 W

-----020557Z 001803 /17

R 011030Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANJUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4212

INFO AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY DAKAR BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANJUL 0464

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GA

SUBJ: GAMBIAN ELECTIONS ENTER HOME STRETCH

1. PRESIDENT JAWARA, AFTER WEEK OF CAMPAIGNING IN LRD AND NBD WILL CONCENTRATE HIS FINAL EFFORTS BEFORE APRIL 4-5 ELECTION IN WESTERN DIVISION CONSTITUENCIES NEAR BANJUL. STILL CONFIDENT OF VICTORY, HE AND HIS PPP APPEAR HEADED FOR RENEWED MANDATE. PERHAPS TO UNDERLIE CONFIDENCE, AND ALSO COUNTER CRITICISM THAT RADIO IS DOMINATED BY PPP, RADIO GAMBIA HAS BEGUN GIVING STRAIGHT NEWS COVERAGE TO NCP ACTIVITIES. LATEST POLICE SPECIAL BRANCH SOUNDINGS, RELAYED TO VISITING OFFICER FROM EMBASSY DAKAR, PREDICT 27 SEATS FOR PPP, TWO FOR NCP (PRESUMABLY BANJUL SUBURBS), TWO FOR UP (UNDOUBTEDLY TWO THEY NOW HOLD IN BANJUL), AND FOUR UNDECIDED (NORTH BANK, AND REMAINING SEATS IN BANJUL AND SUBURBS).

2. WHILE TENSION REMAINS HIGH, NO FURTHER INCIDENTS OF VIOLENT OUTBREAKS HAVE BEEN REPORTED SINCE MARCH 21. POLICE IG TOLD DAKAR OFFICER THAT MANY BAD RUMORS ARE CIRCULATING, BUT STILL LEVEL OF INCIDENTS WELL BELOW THOSE OF HOTLY
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CONTESTED PRE-INDEPENDENCE ELECTION OF 1962. NCP TROUBLE-MAKERS ARE SAME CROWD WHO WERE USED BY PPP AGAINST UP DURING PAST CAMPAIGNS, THEREFORE POLICE KNOW THEIR TACTICS. I.G. M'BOOB IS CONFIDENT HIS POLICE CAN HANDLE ANY DISTURBANCES. POLICE HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO INCARCERATE OFFENDERS IMMEDIATELY. DEMONSTRATIONS BY UP-RIVER PEOPLE IN BANJUL ON APRIL 5 AND 6 (WHEN RESULTS ARE ANNOUNCED)

WILL NOT BE PERMITTED, AS POLICE WILL DENY PERMITS FOR PARADES AND/OR DRUMMINGS ON THOSE DAYS. THIS WILL AVOID CONFRONTATION BETWEEN PRO-PPP PROVINCIALS AND SIZEABLE ANTI-PPP CROWD IN BANJUL.

3. SENEGALESE HIGH COMMISSIONER M'BENGUE AND CHARGE HELD LENGTHY TOUR D'HORIZON MARCH 29, DURING WHICH LATTER CONFIRMED HIS SOUNDINGS BY SENEGALESE INFORMERS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY THAT COMBINED OPPOSITION WOULD NOT TAKE MORE THAN 8 SEATS. WHILE HE INDICATED APPARENT SENEGALESE PREFERENCE FOR RE-ELECTION PRESIDENT JAWARA, HE FEELS DIBBA IS INTELLIGENT, ABLE AND QUITE LIKELY TO WIN NEXT GAMBIAN ELECTION. THIS PROSPECT WOULD NOT DISCOMFIT SENEGAL, HE DECLARED, AS DIBBA HAS REITERATED NEED FOR ESPECIALLY CLOSE SENE-GAMBIA TIES. M'BENGUE FEELS LIKELIHOOD OF CIVIL DISTURBANCE FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENT ELECTION RESULTS IS VERY HIGH, THEREFORE, HE IS CLOSING HIGH COMMISSION APRIL 5 AND 6. IT SHOULD BE RECALLED THAT ANGRY BANJUL MOB SEVERELY DAMAGED SENEGALESE HIGH COMMISSION IN 1969 WHEN ANTI-SENEGAL SENTIMENT RAN HIGH IN GAMBIA, FOLLOWING SENEGAL'S CRACK-DOWN ON FRONTIER COMMERCE.

4. BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER ALSO TOLD CHARGE HE SEES NO MORE THAN 7 OR 8 SEATS GOING TO COMBINED OPPOSITION. WHILE HE AGREED THAT SPECIAL PRUDENCE SHOULD BE EXERCISED APRIL 5, HICOM SHARES OUR ASSESSMENT THAT THINGS NOT LIKELY TO GET OUT OF HAND, AND FOREIGNERS WOULD NOT BE TARGET OF FRUSTRATED SUPPORTERS OF ELECTORAL LOSERS. HE LAUGHED OFF POPULAR RUMOR CURRENTLY MAKING ROUNDS THAT

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BRITISH ARMY UNIT (APPROXIMATELY 150 MEN) PRESENTLY UP RIVER ON TRAINING MISSION, IS REALLY IN GAMBIA TO PROP-UP JAWARA GOVERNMENT AND INTERVENE IN CASE OF DISORDER. WYGANT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NATIONAL ELECTIONS, NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS, ELECTION FORECASTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BANJUL00464
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770114-0105
Format: TEL
From: BANJUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197704100/aaaadizb.tel
Line Count: 101
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 49ecb39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2662791
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GAMBIAN ELECTIONS ENTER HOME STRETCH
TAGS: PINT, GA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/49ecb39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009